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## APNewsBreak: Explo Faced Scrutiny Before La. Scare

AP Associated Press

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DOYLINE, La. December 11, 2012 (AP)

Among the allegations in the reports, federal regulators said Explo used a Chevy pickup truck to haul 350,000 pounds of the explosives around the mine site, but the vehicle did not have "suitable sides to confine" the loads. On one trip, about eight wooden boxes fell out of the truck, broke open and spilled explosives on the ground. The company also failed to properly separate explosives and detonators while hauling the material, the report said.

Explo Systems "displayed a reckless disregard for the health and safety of miners and by giving no consideration to the mining laws applicable to these activities," the Mine Safety and Health Administration said in report dated April 3, 2007.

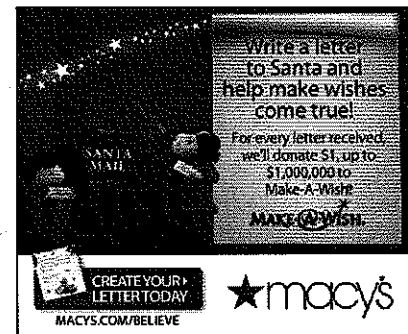
The report said Explo was working as a contractor at the mine.

The company paid fines of \$2,000 for each of at least three violations related to the handling and transporting of explosives, according to federal records.

West Virginia mine safety officials also said Explo violated state regulations, but it wasn't immediately clear what penalties the state may have imposed.

Some workers filed lawsuits claiming the exposure to tetryl made them sick. The substance can cause symptoms including nosebleeds, yellowing of the skin, headaches and, in prolonged exposure, liver damage, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

Explo Systems had planned to use more than a million pounds of tetryl for mining, according to the federal report. That would have enabled the company to dispose of outdated explosives for the Department of Defense while also making money from the mining industry.



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Explo Systems, which was registered in Louisiana in 2001, has made millions from contracts with the military. Last year, the company listed its annual revenue as \$3 million with 70 employees, according to the Federal Procurement Data System.

The Army awarded Explo Systems a contract in 2010 to demilitarize hundreds of thousands of propelling charges for artillery rounds. The contract was for \$2.9 million with options for renewal for four years. The contract called for the demilitarization of as many as 450,000 propelling charges per year. Demilitarizing explosives generally entails changing a device or chemical in a way that it can't be used for battle.

Stephen Abney, a spokesman for the Army's Joint Munitions Command, said it's possible the M6 at the site came from the Army propellant charges, but he couldn't be sure.

Abney said Explo requested on Nov. 27 that the government hold all shipments because Louisiana authorities would not allow them to receive it until inspections and investigations have been completed.

Abney said the Army is gathering information about the events in Louisiana to help it decide whether to continue the contract.

The contract also raises questions about what Explo told the Army when bidding on the job and in subsequent reports. The solicitation for the contract required the company to provide "a detailed description of storage capacity."

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